Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 174331
ORIGIN AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEA-10 /033 R

66011
DRAFTED BY AF/I:LGSHURTLEFF
APPROVED BY AF/I:LGSHURTLEFF
NEA/AFN:JBISHOP
----------091648 112140Z /61
R 111809Z JUL 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
INFO OAU COLLECTIVE
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 174331

FOLLOWING REPEAT KHARTOUM 3054 ACTION STATE INFO BONN LONDON PARIS PRETORIA MOSCOW ROME USUN USICA WASHDC JULY 10.

QUOTE O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 3054

DEPT PASS OAU COLLECTIVE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PORG, OAU, CN, SU
SUBJECT: OAU COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, DAY II: COMORO ISLANDS DELEGATION EXPELLED

REF: (A) KHARTOUM 3043 (B) KHARTOUM 3046

SUMMARY: IN POLITICAL DECISION WHICH COULD AFFECT LEGALITY OF FUTURE DELEGATIONS TO OAU MEETINGS, 31ST COUNCIL OF MINISTERS (COM) HAS EXPELLED DELEGATION FROM COMORO ISLANDS. WHILE DECISION WAS QUICKLY APPROVED BY COM, ISSUE MAY ARISE AGAIN DURING ASSEMBLY OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT (AHG OR SUMMIT) BECAUSE OF QUESTIONABLE PROCEDURES USED TO EXPEL DELEGATION. END SUMMARY
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PAGE 02 STATE 174331

1. FOLLOWING DIFFICULT MORNING SESSION (REF A) COUNCIL OF MINISTERS (COM) FINALLY RESUMED NORMAL AGENDA SCHEDULE IN EVENING. AFTER DECIDING UPON BREAU OF COM (REF B), PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BENIN (PROB) FONMIN REQUESTED THAT COMORO ISLANDS DELEGATION BE EXPELLED ON GROUNDS THAT IT WAS BROUGHT TO POWER BY "NOTORIOUS BOB DENARD GANG."

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

MAIL SECONDED PROB REQUEST. SUPPORT CAME FROM GUINEA, ALGERIA, LIBYA (ADDING CALL FOR CONDEMNATION OF DENARD AND "ESPECIALLY THOSE BEHIND HIM") AND NIGERIA, WHICH REQUESTED THAT CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE BE ESTABLISHED IMMEDIATELY BY COM TO SCRUTINIZE ANY OTHER QUESTIONABLE CREDENTIALS.

2. WHILE NO MEMBERS ACTUALLY OPPOSED EXPULSION OF COMORO DELEGATION, SOME MEMBERS DID ENTER "RESERVATIONS" BECAUSE OF SUMMARY NATURE OF COM DECISION AND ITS UNWILLINGNESS TO ALLOW COMORO DELEGATION TO SPEAK. IVORY COAST, MAURITANIA AND MAURITIUS TOOK POSITION THAT COMORO DELEGATION SHOULD AT LEAST BE ALLOWED TO EXPLAIN ITSELF, AND HAD COM NOTE THEIR RESERVATIONS. CENTRAL AFRICA EMPIRE, CHAD, SENEGAL AND TUNISIA WANTED IT RECORDED BY COM THAT THEY DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN DEBATE. ZAIRE ABSTAINED. ASG ONU CHARACTERIZED COM DECISION AS UNANIMOUS EVEN THOUGH PERHAPS AS MANY AS 20 MEMBERS EXPRESSED PROCEDURAL RESERVATIONS. SUDAN AS CHAIRMAN OF COM ASKED COMORO DELEGATION TO LEAVE COM AND IT DID.

3. OFFICIAL OAU SPOKESMAN FOR COM, DR. PETER ONU, EXPLAINED THAT EXPULSION OF COMORO DELEGATION WAS NOT AN OAU PRECEDENT, AS FEARED BY TWO DELEGATIONS. ONU ASSERTED THAT OAU REJECTION OF TSHOMBE (ZAIRE) CREDENTIALS IN 1964 AND OBOTE (UGANDA) CREDENTIALS IN 1971 WERE PARALLEL CASES. ONU FURTHER SAID CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 STATE 174331

THAT EXPULSION OF COMORO DELEGATION WAS ONLY FOR KHARTOUM MEETINGS AND THAT COMORO ISLANDS WOULD REMAIN MEMBER OF OAU.

4. COMMENT: OAU DECISION HAS CAUSED ONLY MILD SURPRISE AND DID NOT APPEAR TO HAVE DISTURBED CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS INITIALLY. NIGERIAN REQUEST FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE VIEWED AS PROPER AND NECESSARY AND COULD SET PRECEDENT FOR FUTURE OAU MEETINGS. COM ACCEPTED AS FACT THAT "NOTORIOUS" MERCENARY BOB DENARD WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR RECENT (MAY 1978) COUP IN COMOROS AND FOR THIS REASON ACHIEVED SUPERFICIAL UNANIMITY IN EXPELLING DELEGATION, DESPITE "RADICAL" SPONSORSHIP OF RESULTION.

5. OAU HAS TAKEN POLITICAL DECISION RATHER THAN LEGAL ONE IN EXPELLING COMORO DELEGATION AND MAY FIND ITSELF IN DIFFICULT POSITION IN FUTURE TO DETERMINE IN LEGAL TERMS, WHAT IS ACCEPTABLY CONSTITUTED GOVERNMENT IN AFRICAN CONTEXT. IT APPEARS NOTORIETY OF DENARD AND HIS ROLE IN COMOROS COUP ARE REASON FOR OAU EXPULSION OF DELEGATION, BUT ISSUE MAY ARISE AGAIN DURING HEADS OF STATE SUMMIT (AHG).

6. MAURITANIAN FONMIN MOUKNASS SAID THAT SENEGAL WAS

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

PREPARING CASE FOR PRESENTATION TO AHG WHICH COULD HAVE DEGREE OF MODERATE SUPPORT. MOUKNASS CLAIMED THAT MODERATES WERE NOT PREPARED FOR EXPULSION OF COMORO DELEGATION AND FELT AT A LOSS WHEN COMOROS DID NOT SPEAK UP TO DEFEND THEMSELVES. ACCORDING TO MOUKNASS, THIS MADE IT DIFFICULT FOR MODERATES TO DEFEND POLITICALLY EMBARRASSING COMOROS, IN SPITE OF FACT DELEGATION REPRE-SENTS ONS ONLY GOVERNMENT OF ISLANDS. BERGUS UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SUMMIT MEETINGS, MEETING DELEGATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE174331
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: LGSHURTLEFF
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780284-0337
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780773/aaaacjou.tel
Line Count: 124
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 2d894977-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 KHARTOUM 3043, 78 KHARTOUM 3046
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2048725
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: OAU COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, DAY II: COMORO ISLANDS DELEGATION EXPELLED
TAGS: PORG, CN, SU, OAU
To: OAU COLLECTIVE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/2d894977-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
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20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014